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[*on the report of the Second Committee (A/72/423/Add.1)*]

72/231. Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

The General Assembly,

Recalling the Istanbul Declaration[1] and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,[2] adopted at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 9 to 13 May 2011, and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/280 of 17 June 2011, in which the Assembly called upon all the relevant stakeholders to commit to implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action,

Recalling also the Political Declaration adopted by the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, held in Antalya, Turkey, from 27 to 29 May 2016, and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/294 of 25 July 2016, in which the Assembly called upon all the relevant stakeholders to commit to implementing the Declaration,

Reaffirming the overarching goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action of overcoming the structural challenges faced by the least developed countries to eradicate poverty, achieve the internationally agreed development goals and enable graduation from the least developed country category,

Reaffirming also its resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", in which it adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets, its commitment to working tirelessly for the full implementation of the Agenda by 2030, its recognition that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty,

[1] *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9–13 May 2011* (A/CONF.219/7), chap. I.

[2] Ibid., chap. II.

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is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, its commitment to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — in a balanced and integrated manner, and to building upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business,

Reaffirming further its resolution 69/313 of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, supports and complements it, helps to contextualize its means of implementation targets with concrete policies and actions, and reaffirms the strong political commitment to address the challenge of financing and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity,

Welcoming the Paris Agreement[3] and its early entry into force, encouraging all its parties to fully implement the Agreement, and parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change[4] that have not yet done so to deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, where appropriate, as soon as possible,

Welcoming also the New Urban Agenda, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), held in Quito, Ecuador, from 17 to 20 October 2016,

Recalling its resolution 71/238 of 21 December 2016 on the follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries,

Recalling also Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/28 of 25 July 2017 on the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,

Recalling further its resolution 67/221 of 21 December 2012 on the smooth transition for countries graduating from the list of least developed countries,

1. *Takes note* of the reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020[5] and on crisis mitigation and resilience-building for the least developed countries,[6] as well as the report of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, entitled "State of the Least Developed Countries, 2017";[7]

2. *Calls upon* the least developed countries, their development partners, the United Nations system and all other actors to further strengthen the global partnership for development for the least developed countries in all priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action[2] in order to ensure the timely, effective and full implementation of the Programme of Action during the remainder of the decade, in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[8] the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,[9] which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda, supports and complements it and helps to contextualize its means of implementation targets with concrete policies and actions, the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

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[3] Adopted under the UNFCCC in FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, decision 1/CP.21.

[4] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

[5] A/72/83-E/2017/60.

[6] A/72/270.

[7] Available from: unohrlls.org/custom-content/uploads/2017/07/State-of-the-LDCs_2017.pdf.

[8] Resolution 70/1.

[9] Resolution 69/313, annex.

Change,[1] the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030[10] and the New Urban Agenda;[11]

3. *Invites* the private sector, civil society and foundations to contribute to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in their respective areas of competence, in line with the national priorities of the least developed countries;

4. *Recalls* the decision contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that effective linkages will be made with the follow-up and review arrangements of all relevant United Nations conferences and processes, including on the least developed countries, underlines the importance of strong synergy in the implementation of the recently adopted agendas and the Istanbul Programme of Action at all levels, and encourages coordination and coherence in the follow-up of their implementation;

5. *Notes with appreciation* that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda incorporate a number of key development challenges and priorities for the least developed countries;

6. *Reaffirms* the lessons learned in the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the recommendations contained in the Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020;[12]

7. *Recalls* the objectives of the Istanbul Programme of Action of enhancing good governance at all levels by strengthening democratic processes, institutions and the rule of law; increasing efficiency, coherence, transparency and participation; protecting and promoting human rights; and reducing corruption and strengthening the capacity of the Governments of the least developed countries to play an effective role in their economic and social development;

8. *Reaffirms* that the least developed countries, as the most vulnerable group of countries, need enhanced global support to overcome the structural challenges they face in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in this regard calls upon the international community to prioritize and strengthen support from all sources to facilitate the coordinated implementation and coherent follow-up to and monitoring of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in the least developed countries;

9. *Recognizes* that significant additional domestic public resources, including at the subnational level, supplemented by international assistance, as appropriate, will be critical for the realization of sustainable development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda acknowledge the centrality of domestic resource mobilization, underscored by the principle of national ownership;

10. *Also recognizes* that, while the least developed countries have made considerable efforts to mobilize domestic resources and attract private investment, further progress is needed;

11. *Encourages* the least developed countries, in accordance with their national plans and priorities, and with the full support of their development partners, to develop their capacities to track financial transactions, administer taxation and

[10] Resolution 69/283, annex II.
[11] Resolution 71/256, annex.
[12] Resolution 70/294, annex.

regulate customs and to redouble their efforts to substantially reduce illicit financial flows by 2030, with a view to eventually eliminating them, including by combating tax evasion and corruption through strengthened national regulation, and also encourages the United Nations and other relevant international bodies to help to support these efforts, in accordance with their respective mandates;

12. *Recognizes* that private business activity, investment and innovation are major drivers of productivity, inclusive economic growth and job creation, and that private international capital flows, in particular foreign direct investment, along with a stable international financial system, are vital complements to national development efforts;

13. *Expresses its concern* that foreign direct investment flows to the least developed countries contracted by 13 per cent, to $38 billion, in 2016 compared to 2015, with continued concentration on extractive and related industries, and underlines the need to take the measures necessary at all levels to further accelerate foreign direct investment in the least developed countries;

14. *Also expresses its concern* that, while the least developed countries are in need of global support, bilateral official development assistance (ODA) to the least developed countries declined by 3.9 per cent in 2016 compared to 2015, according to preliminary numbers, and underlines the urgent need to reverse the decline, while expressing its appreciation to those few countries that have met or surpassed their commitments to 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI) for ODA to developing targets and the target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNI for ODA to the least developed countries, urges all others to step up efforts to increase their ODA and to make additional concrete efforts towards the ODA targets, reiterates that the fulfilment of all ODA commitments remains crucial, calls upon ODA providers to fulfil their respective ODA commitments to the least developed countries, and encourages ODA providers to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.2 per cent of GNI for ODA to the least developed countries, while reiterating that an important use of international public finance, including ODA, is to catalyse additional resource mobilization from other sources, public and private;

15. *Encouraged* by those who are allocating at least 50 per cent of their official development assistance to the least developed countries;

16. *Welcomes* continued efforts to improve the quality, impact and effectiveness of development cooperation and other international efforts in public finance, including adherence to agreed development cooperation effectiveness principles;

17. *Reiterates* that an important use of international public finance, including official development assistance, is to catalyse additional resource mobilization from other sources, public and private;

18. *Calls upon* the developing countries, guided by the spirit of solidarity and consistent with their capabilities, to provide support for the effective implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in mutually agreed areas of cooperation within the framework of South-South cooperation, which is a complement to but not a substitute for North-South cooperation;

19. *Expresses its concern* that, in 2015, merchandise exports of the least developed countries contracted by 25 per cent, a significantly larger drop than in 2014, and further declined by 6 per cent in 2016, resulting in a considerable decline in their share of world merchandise exports, which stood at 0.94 per cent in 2016, and calls upon the least developed countries and their development partners to take the

measures necessary to reverse this trend, with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020;[13]

20. *Recognizes* that the least developed countries face significant infrastructure gaps, including in the areas of transport, energy, and information and communications technology, and reaffirms the need to promote quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure and to enhance infrastructure connectivity with concrete actions, maximizing synergies in infrastructure planning and development;

21. *Also recognizes* the significant potential of regional economic integration and interconnectivity to promote inclusive growth and sustainable development in the least developed countries, and stresses the need to strengthen regional cooperation and regional trade agreements to improve connectivity and competitiveness, increase productivity, lower transaction costs and expand markets;

22. *Stresses* the need for the international community to remain vigilant in monitoring the debt situation of the least developed countries and to continue to take effective measures, preferably within existing frameworks, when applicable, to address the debt problem of those countries, including through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief, debt restructuring and sound debt management, as appropriate, for the multilateral and bilateral debt owed by the least developed countries to creditors, both public and private, reiterates its commitment to work through existing initiatives, such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, and reaffirms the importance of transparency in debt management;

23. *Recognizes* that maintaining sustainable debt levels is the responsibility of the borrowing countries, while acknowledging that lenders also have a responsibility to lend in such a way that does not undermine a country's debt sustainability, recalls the need to strengthen information-sharing and transparency to make sure that debt sustainability assessments are based on comprehensive, objective and reliable data, and encourages Member States to work towards global consensus on guidelines for debtor and creditor responsibilities in borrowing by and lending to sovereigns, building on existing initiatives;

24. *Also recognizes* the importance of developing domestic capital markets in the least developed countries, which can help channel the growing pool of domestic savings towards productive investments, reaffirms the commitment to enhance international support in developing domestic capital markets in developing countries, in particular in the least developed countries, and also reaffirms its commitment to work to strengthen capacity-building in this area, including through regional, interregional and global forums for knowledge-sharing, technical assistance and data-sharing;

25. *Further recognizes* the significant potential of multilateral development banks and other international development banks in financing sustainable development and providing know-how to the least developed countries;

26. *Invites* the Secretary-General, in his capacity as the Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, to retain the issue of investment promotion regimes for the least developed countries in the agenda of the Board, with a view to enhancing the overall effectiveness of the support provided by the United Nations system to increase the flow of foreign direct investment to the least developed countries and the ability of those countries to attract such investment, and takes note of the coordinated efforts of the United Nations system in this regard;[14]

[13] See resolution 70/1.

[14] See CEB/2017/4, para. 44.

27. *Welcomes* the establishment and operationalization of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, takes note with appreciation of the contributions that Turkey has made and of the pledges that other countries have made, invites Member States, as well as international organizations, foundations and the private sector, to provide financial and technical assistance to the Technology Bank to ensure its effective operation;

28. *Expresses its deep concern* that, owing to significant capacity constraints, the least developed countries are disproportionately affected by the adverse impacts of climate change, including persistent drought and extreme weather events, sea-level rise, coastal erosion, salinity intrusion, glacier lake outburst floods, ocean acidification and the rise in frequency, as well as the impact, of natural and man-made disasters, which further threaten food security and efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development, and expresses its concern that women and girls are often disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change and other environmental issues;

29. *Recognizes* the synergies between the implementation of the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, acknowledges the importance of continued support for and international cooperation on adaptation and mitigation efforts and on strengthening resilience, stresses the necessity of adequate and predictable financial resources from a variety of sources, including public and private ones, highlights the specific needs and special circumstances of developing countries, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, recognizes that effective disaster risk management contributes to sustainable development, and in this regard underlines the importance of strengthening disaster risk reduction and early warning systems in order to minimize the consequences of disasters;

30. *Reaffirms* that achieving gender equality, empowering all women and girls and the full realization of the human rights of all people are essential to achieving sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development, and reiterates the need for gender mainstreaming, including targeted actions and investments in the formulation and implementation of all financial, economic, environmental and social policies in the least developed countries;

31. *Recognizes* that particular efforts are needed to ensure that all young people, including girls, enjoy access to lifelong learning opportunities and equal access to quality education at all levels, inclusive of early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education, as well as technical and vocational training, notes with concern, in this regard, the lack of progress in closing gender gaps in access to, retention in and completion of secondary education, and recognizes the need to continue to provide and encourage, as appropriate, institutes of higher education to allocate places and scholarships for students and trainees from the least developed countries, in particular in the fields of science, technology, business management and economics;

32. *Also recognizes* that furthering participation, empowering civil society, youth and women and strengthening collective action will contribute to the eradication of poverty and the achievement of sustainable development;

33. *Reiterates* that more effective representation of the least developed countries in decision-making at the global level could improve the international environment for their development, and also reiterates that the international economic system and architecture should be inclusive and responsive to the special development needs of the least developed countries, ensuring their effective participation, voice and representation at all levels;

34. *Underlines* the need to reduce the vulnerability of the least developed countries to economic, natural and environmental shocks and disasters, as well as climate change, and to enhance their ability to meet these and other challenges by strengthening their resilience, and in this regard stresses that it is important that all countries and other actors work together to further develop and implement concrete measures, on an urgent basis, at the national and international levels so as to build the resilience of the least developed countries to withstand economic shocks and mitigate their adverse effects, to withstand and overcome the adverse effects of climate change, to enhance sustainable growth and protect biodiversity and to withstand natural hazards in order to reduce the risk of disasters, as agreed upon in the Istanbul Programme of Action;

35. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on crisis mitigation and resilience-building for the least developed countries, including its finding that the multilateral risk reduction strategies and mechanisms have proven insufficient for the least developed countries, and in this regard, in order to address these issues, underlines the importance of improving the coordination and effectiveness of resilience-building initiatives for the least developed countries by leveraging existing measures at the national, regional and global levels to respond to various types of disasters and shocks, as elaborated in the report of the Secretary-General;

36. *Congratulates* those countries that have graduated from least developed country status, notes with appreciation that several least developed countries have expressed their intention to reach the status of graduation by 2020, invites those countries to start the preparations for their graduation and transition strategy, and requests all relevant organizations of the United Nations system, led by the Office of the High Representative, to extend necessary support in this regard, in a coordinated manner;

37. *Reiterates* its recommendation that the consultative mechanism specified in its resolution 59/209 of 20 December 2004 be established by the graduating country, in cooperation with its bilateral and multilateral development and trading partners, to facilitate the preparation of the transition strategy and the identification of the associated actions and the negotiation of their duration and phasing-out for a period appropriate to the development situation of the country, and that it be integrated into other relevant consultative processes and initiatives between the graduating country and its development partners;

38. *Invites* development partners to make available timely information about country-specific support measures and related smooth transition measures for the least developed countries in the areas of financial support, technical assistance and trade-related measures, including their time frames, characteristics and modalities;

39. *Acknowledges* that the graduation of a country symbolizes its considerable long-term socioeconomic progress, prevailing over the structural handicaps to socioeconomic development, and that it also presents many challenges for graduated countries, which continue to face vulnerabilities to various shocks and crises;

40. *Requests* the Secretary-General to elaborate in his report to the General Assembly on the implementation, effectiveness and added value of smooth transition measures, as requested in its resolution 70/216 of 22 December 2015, covering both graduating and recently graduated countries, including ways that graduated countries can be supported on their development path;

41. *Invites* development partners to consider the least developed country indicators, namely gross national income per capita, the human assets index and the economic vulnerability index, as part of their criteria for allocating official development assistance;

42. *Recognizes* that the activities relating to the least developed countries carried out within the Secretariat need to be further coordinated and consolidated in order to ensure the effective monitoring and follow-up of the Istanbul Programme of Action, led by the Office of the High Representative, and to provide well-coordinated support to realizing the goal of enabling half of the least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020;

43. *Takes note* of the work of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group for the least developed countries, led by the Office of the High Representative, notes the steps taken by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the High-level Committee on Programmes in supporting the coordination and follow-up of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action on a system-wide basis, and reiterates its invitation to the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the Chief Executives Board, to include the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in the agenda of the Board;

44. *Underlines* the need to give particular attention to the issues and concerns of the least developed countries in all major United Nations conferences and processes;

45. *Reiterates its request* to the Secretary-General to include, as appropriate, the issues of concern to the least developed countries in all relevant reports in the economic, social, environmental and related fields in order to support the implementation of the goals set out in the Istanbul Programme of Action;

46. *Strongly encourages* Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, major groups and other donors to contribute in a timely manner to the trust fund in support of activities undertaken by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to support the implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the participation of the representatives from the least developed countries in the high-level political forum on sustainable development of the Economic and Social Council as well as in other relevant forums, and in this regard expresses its appreciation to those countries that have made voluntary contributions to the trust fund;

47. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session a report on the implementation of the present resolution and the Istanbul Programme of Action, and decides to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-third session, under the item entitled "Groups of countries in special situations", the sub-item entitled "Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries", unless otherwise agreed.

74th plenary meeting
20 December 2017